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MRS. G. M. MILLER. "Your remarks in reference to the use of blue denim for house draperies, in a recent issue of the DECORATOR AND FURNISHER, interested me. Its washing so well makes it indeed a very available material, especially for furnishing in the country. Will you tell me, if you please, whether you think it would answer for door hangings? and will you suggest the manner of decoration?" It will answer, certainly, for door draperies, but lacking the weight which door hangings should have to be effective, we think it suits better for window hangings. However, it can be used for curtaining doorways, and now that it represents a popular *furor*, it may be regarded as æsthetic or artistic, if not positively handsome. In making, let the wrong side be turned outward for the body of the curtain, and turn up a hem—which will turn the right side outward—eighteen inches deep. Then sew to the top a valance eighteen inches deep, the right side outward, and trim with a fringe of tassels suspended to a double-and-twisted cord about twelve inches deep, made of stout flax thread or darning cotton. You can, if you will give the time, ornament the valance with an arabesque or conventionalized design cut out of heavy white linen, which is most effective if confined at the edge by German cord or purl-edged braid, couched on with black silk in button-hole stitch. But for door hangings something that falls in heavier folds than denim (which answers better for window drapery) is to be preferred; and denim, we are inclined to think, is a passing fancy. Handsome and effective door draperies are made of the printed canton flannels, some of which are in very artistic designs; and the Turcomans, which are shown in all the fashionable plain colorings and in rich damask designs, are elegant in effect and cheap enough to suit very slender purses. Denim is a stiff-looking material, falling with an effect somewhat wiry, and hardly as rich as door hangings should be. When tastefully decorated, however, it answers admirably for mantel lambrequins, table covers, and the drapery seen on the latest washstands; and any housewife who would take the time to decorate window curtains, door and washstand draperies and a table cover of denim, in white linen arabesque designs, finished as suggested, could furnish a bed-room extremely tastefully.

MINNIE LANGDON. "Can you give me an idea about making frames for photographs? I understand that some ladies are economizing by making their own picture frames, and equaling professional manufactures in home-made work." Very tasteful frames for photographs are made of card board covered with Chinese grass linen, dotted with blossoms of Kensington embroidery. A pretty design is of full-blown buttercups and buttercup buds, and this design is convenient for a tyro in embroidery, as the buttercup is a blossom of perfectly shadeless color, and silk of only the buttercup-yellow is needed for the work. Pansies, in the various rich purples and yellows, make an extremely pretty design for embroidery on the grass linen for covering photograph plans; and rich designs are in sprigs of various blossoms in imitation of Saxony china ornamentation, and wild roses and apple blossoms may be used with charming effect. Have for your frame two oblong squares of card-board, cutting from the centre of one of the squares an oblong square space large enough for the display of the picture, leaving a margin around of about two inches. It is usual to make these frames for two pictures, folding book-wise, face to face, but they may be extended to hold six or more, folding like a screen. Secure the linen over the plain squares firmly, by basting on, and let it be large enough to lap over the edges, when it must be confined by thin smooth paste. If for a pair of pictures, have a little space between the squares in laying the board on the linen, and if for several pictures, leave spaces between each square to allow for folding. The same rule must be observed in laying on the squares for the front of the frame, and when the linen is secured, cut out the space through which the picture is to appear, leaving enough of the muslin to lap over the edge, and paste securely. Now lay the fronts and backs together, and overseam around the sides and bottom, leaving the top unsewed for slipping in the glass which covers, and the photograph. Let a ribbon run across the back, for tying the frame together when folded, and ribbon bows may be set in the upper left-hand corners. These frames, made to hold several pictures and folding like a screen, are very pretty. The work is especially suitable for young girls.

MARTHA LA FONTAINE. "In an issue of the DECORATOR AND FURNISHER, I noticed a paragraph in regard to the finish and trimming of bed linen. Will you be kind enough to tell me whether you have ever seen the rich drawn work now in vogue applied to bed linen? the method of trimming, and the trimmings used, with some general ideas in reference to trimmed bed linen? I do drawn work, in many rich patterns, and I have thought of one or two sets of bed linen decorated with this work; but that I fear I may overleap the mode, and the work is far too tedious to expend time on it ridiculously." You have struck the keynote in the question involved in your inquiries. The time necessary to do the elegant and elaborate work of which you speak is what must give you pause. With the time and patience at command, you could only do well in enriching your bed linen in drawn work. We have seen a number of sets so enriched, while the possibilities in the work were by no means reached in the patterns that came under notice. The work is a revival of an old point done in Italy, and of specimens of work done by the early English nuns, now and then exhumed from barrows in England, and called *punto tirato*. For one of your bed sets you might work a broad band inside the hem of the sheets, introducing the triangles, stars and other fancies seen in darning, with fagoting and herring-bone borderings, the design comprehending a very rich insertion; and have pillow-cases with deep ends to match. And for a second set, you could run within the hem a design introducing wheels, cob-webs, etc., on the sheets, with pillow-shams, the entire centre of which could be filled in with the work. For trimming, you should have some rich, heavy flax thread lace—the guipures done with the Barbour threads would be suitable for the purpose; and, by-the-by, a few experiments in lace-making might be agreeable to you. French lingières send out with all their elegant trosses sumptuous sets of bed linen. Some of the most recent of these are enriched in *punto tirato*, but generally the work is in floriated designs of cambric embroidery in satin stitch, with trimming of fluted Valenciennes lace, or with crimped ruffles of linen cambric edged with narrow Valenciennes lace. On some of these sets of bed linen there is a marvelous expenditure of hemstitching, while the most simple of them put to shame all the boasted industry of our American ladies, it being patent that the work is done by women's fingers. American ladies might do well to take lessons in needle work from their peasant sisters in Russia and middle Europe. This elegant bed furnishing can be commanded only by the wealthy: it is cheap, indeed, when we consider the expenditure in eyesight and time involved in its perfection. A bed set, in memory, of linen lawn, is enriched with a dense floral garland, four inches wide, and bordered with two rows of very fine, fluted Valenciennes lace, the monogram of the fortunate owner wrought in script six inches deep, on the upper sheet and in the centre of the pillow cases. A second set enriched with cambric embroidery, is bordered with a lace edged crimped ruffle. This work might be done at home, if patience were not conspicuously lacking in our national character. The American mind, in neither sex, is disposed to be troubled with details. Drawn work, to be firm and even, must be stretched in double hoop frame before the darning is begun, and it is much richer if flax thread is used for darning.

FLORA C. DARROW. "I have thought that the splint baskets in which we get peaches might in some way be decorated for waste baskets, and being ready in device and suggestion, I have turned to you for your opinion and advice. Can you help me? These baskets are prettily shaped, and if tastefully decorated, they would be a very attractive addition in the minor details of furnishing ladies' chambers." Your idea is a good one, and a splint fruit basket may become an ornamental addendum in furnishing a lady's room. Suppose you first give your basket a coat of oil paint, shading from a neutral or greyish blue, or a pure grey of medium dark tone at the bottom to a pale tint at the top, and when dry, paint upon each splint a floral spray, or surround the basket between the hoops with a floral garland, covering the hoops with quilled satin ribbon which may be confined with small tacks. Line the basket with pink or blue marceline silk or cotton silesia, and trim on one side with a bouquet bow of satin ribbons in several colors, the ribbons from three to four inches wide. Or, instead of the floral decoration, paint your

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basket with a mineral color, shading from a deep tone at the bottom to a pale tint at the top, and lay around the top a valance of felt or billiard cloth, pinked at the lower edge and enriched with Kensington, outline, or arabesque embroidery, and trimming it with ribbon bows as your taste may suggest. These baskets would be improved by an interlining of thin cotton wadding.

DECORATIVE COMPOSITION.

Translated from the French of HENRI MAYEUX, Architect to the French Government, and Professor of Decorative Art in the Municipal Schools of Paris.



VI.—GOLD AND SILVER.

GOLD is distributed in many portions of the globe. It exists in England and Wales, but only in small quantities. Gold has been accepted by most nations as the embodiment of wealth, and its qualities can hardly be over-estimated. Few chemicals act on it; it does not tarnish or alter by melting and recasting, and the beauty and splendor of its color have been universally felt; it is

portable and so ductile that it can be beaten out to almost the consistency of tissue paper. The art of beating out gold into thin leaves is not a modern invention. Pliny states that in his time "one ounce could be stretched out into seven hundred and fifty leaves four fingers square."

In order to enhance the natural glitter of gold and silver, artists, at a very early period, introduced precious stones, pearls, crystals, etc., into their work. The stones were not cut into facets as they are in the present day, but ground down with as much symmetry as their natural shape would allow.

Among the oldest examples of gold work none are so remarkable as the collection found in a tomb at Thebes, including a gold dagger, a diadem, a square brooch set with colored stones, a bracelet ornamented with raised figures, a boat of massive gold, etc., of about 1500 B. C.

We read that the temple of Belus, in Babylon, had a golden image of colossal size, and that the throne and table which stood in the porch were also of gold. It is probable that similar works were only plated on a wooden frame; that this was the case with the statue of Pallas-Athene, by Pheidias, which stood in the Parthenon, we know from the testimony of Pausanias, who saw it in place. The Greek and Etruscan artists set great store on the color of gold, which they were loth to hide with enamel; hence specimens of this work are very scarce in our museums. Allusions to wrought and raised work abound in all classic writers; the beautiful description of the shield of Achilles presented to Thetis by Vulcan, "the divine artificer," will be remembered by readers of Homer.

The "Treasure of Hildesheim," in the Berlin Museum, is one of the most important collections of Roman gold and silver handicraft. It consists of cups, vases, dishes, a tray, and other pieces for a dining-table, many of them of beautiful design and execution. It was unearthed in 1808.

Precious stones have been associated in all ages with the East. "From India," says Sir H. Layard, "precious stones were probably supplied to Babylon and Nineveh." The wealth of the jeweled gems, of the gold and silver, set forth in "The Thousand and One Nights," belonged to the East; whence also the fleets of Solomon and Hiram brought, among other rare things, "precious stones." "In Byzantium," says Labarte, "gold, silver, pearls and precious stones were scattered about with a profusion which surpasses imagination."

The Middle Ages abound in work of silver and gold or copper gilt, both pierced, chased, enameled or set with precious stones, such as chasses, pyxes, book mountings, croziers, church and other plate, candlesticks, etc., characterized by profusion of ornament and skillful manipulation.

Among the most interesting examples of English work of this period may be mentioned the coronation spoon kept in the Tower of the thirteenth century; the Ampulla, or dove, also used at the coronation, and probably a reproduction of an earlier piece; and last, not least, the beautiful Lynn Cup, cir. 1350, of silver gilt and translucent enamel, belonging to the corporation of that town.

With the Renaissance, in Italy, in France, in Germany, and in England, metal works admirable in every respect were produced, exhibiting an infinite variety of designs of every size and magnificence. Many painters, sculptors and architects of this period had begun their career, like Pheidias, as goldsmiths.

Remarkable specimens of English plate, both ecclesiastical and secular, ranging from the thirteenth century almost to the

present day, are to be seen in the South Kensington Collection, in the Colleges of our Universities, in many churches and private houses, such as chalices, dishes, kettles, cups or hanaps, Fig. 199.

Enamel, as we have seen, was known to the Byzantine artists, but this kind of decoration was of Asiatic origin, and introduced with great splendor and effect in the work of the Lower Empire. The Egyptians, Assyrians, Greeks and Etruscans all used gilding on metals, wood, masonry and marble.

We know of little or nothing of the methods of the old Greek and Etruscan artists to separate and join pieces at once so fine and minute as to be invisible to the naked eye, nor of their mode of melting, soldering and wire-drawing in their filigree and granulated work.

Signor Castellani, after infinite pains to discover the ancient mode of working the delicate ornaments found in the tombs of Greece and Etruria, succeeded at last in producing brooches, bracelets and ear-rings, rivaling their models in elegance and manipulation, Figs. 20. and 202.

The method for working precious metals is the same as that employed for bronze, iron, brass, etc. With this difference, that as their character is purely decorative, they will not be put to hard uses, but, on the contrary, will be preserved with great care. Consequently their chief characteristics should not be solidity and massiveness, as is too often the case with modern ornaments, wherein the greatest amount of metal seems to be the main object. They should rather be distinguished by freedom, elegance of design and delicacy of workmanship, especially when shells, pearls, gems and precious stones are studded about the work as points and sparkles of effulgent coloring and effectiveness, either to represent foliage, flowers or animal forms, as seen in Fig. 203.

Even simple designs, such as bracelets, are often spoiled through being made too thick and heavy, unrelieved by decoration, and more appropriate to house furniture than to adorn the wrist of a lady. Our Fig. 205 shows that the same object, varied by a simple design, be it nielling or enamel, will at once raise its standard from an artistic point of view.

It may be urged that such is the fashion, but if fashion is bad why not alter it? Reference to the models handed down from the best periods of art is within reach of every one who will take the trouble to visit our stupendous public collections; and if the designs and forms cannot be styled "the latest thing out," that does not necessarily detract from their intrinsic value.

Do we complain because nature reproduces as surely as the spring comes around exactly the same forms and the same tints in the vegetable and animal kingdoms? Are we not ready to welcome the ever-recurring snow-drop, the simple primrose, and the no less simple but sweet-scented violet, as well as the more brilliant galaxy of their gorgeous sisters, and the wealth of leaf and foliage?

In conclusion, we may remark that the art of cutting, polishing and fashioning precious stones has reached such perfection that all their elements of beauty may now be developed to the utmost.

VIII.—METAL ENGRAVING, STONE ENGRAVING, NIELLING, DAMASCENING AND SERAFITTO.

Engraving is executed by means of tools of various sizes, the points being flat or rounded. Metal engraving is treated exactly like common engraving; the outline of the design is traced on the metal, then cut to the required depth with a graver, and the ground is matted or cut in light parallel or cross lines. But although the process is the same, the result is widely different. Thus, while the common engraver strives to reproduce as faithfully as possible the tones, the exact modeling, the texture and variety of the minutest details of the original picture, the decorative engraver will proceed by bold cutting of the general masses, contenting himself with bringing out the general shapes of the outline.

Stippling cannot well be too simple, either when introduced in the background or to shade the half tints of the form. Designs, it should be recollected, may be applied to inwrought or inversely to plain grounds, the ornament appearing matted or bright cut, Fig. 206.

As the outlines of graven forms lack precision, color was added in very early times to the incised lines to remedy this, and thus give rise to the charming and effective art of *nielling*, which consists of a compound of silver, lead, sulphur and copper, made into a powder and passed through the furnace, forming a dark-colored paste carefully laid into the lines of the engraving, and yielding a pleasing contrast with the bright color of the silver. The aspect of *niello* is that of an engraving.

Mention has already been made of the metal engraving of the nations bordering on the Mediterranean, but a word should be said upon the elaborate ornamentation, the wealth of engraving, of nielling and incrustation of Indian metal work, Fig. 207, its magnificence recalling the glowing descriptions of the ancient poet. Nor should the artists of the Renaissance be left unnoticed, for they too were lavish in their use of nielling as a mode of decorating precious metals, Fig. 208.

Damascening is the art of inlaying or incrusting one metal